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ABSTRACT

Because of the inability of public schools in eastern North Carolina to understand cultural and racial diversity, many students do not receive an education that prepares them for the future. Eastern North Carolina is a culturally diverse area. Unfortunately, the limited cultural perspective of the region's schools can contribute to student failure. The Institute for Multicultural Education and Change at East Carolina University found that many educational leaders did not understand their role in developing and shaping the culture of their schools. The institute worked to help educational leaders design organizational interventions for multicultural education. An intensive course included three goals: explore how dominant cultures perceive differences as deficiencies; learn how cultural differences affect parents, teachers, and students; and develop skills helpful in shaping school culture. Participants also were required to formulate plans for developing multicultural education at their schools. A survey after the program revealed participants more fully understood multicultural education and were more aware of their own cultural perceptions. However, participants were hesitant to implement their multicultural plans for fear they would not receive sufficient support. The appendices contain a sample survey, a telephone interview protocol, and a schedule for the program. (Contains 12 references.) (JPT)

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An Institute for Multicultural Education and Change

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Introduction

This presentation addresses an intervention developed in the School of Education at East Carolina University to improve the quality of education for all students in Eastern North Carolina. The Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation and the School of Education implemented the Institute for Multicultural Education and Change in the summer of 1991. The Institute became a reality because of the financial support of the Z. Smith Reynolds foundation and the administrative and moral support of our colleagues in the School of Education.

The presentation will have four major sections. I will spend some more time with you discussing the background, purpose, and objectives of the Institute. Dr. Henry Peel, co-director of the Institute, will discuss the design of the Institute, the recruitment of participants, and the implementation of our plans. I will present the design and the results of our formative evaluation and discuss our perception of the implications.

Problem

Generally, the public schools in Eastern North Carolina do not provide an education which will prepare all students to function effectively in the 21st century. We believe that this inability is directly related to the culture of the schools and their failure to effectively coop with the cultural and racial diversity of their students (Gibson, 1991; Ogbu, 1991a; Ogbu, 1991b).

Background

The structure and culture of a school affect the commitment of the teachers and the accomplishment of the students (Rosenholtz, 1989). Schools in Eastern North Carolina, a culturally diverse region, often do not complement the communities which they serve. Many teachers and administrators are unaware how this limited cultural perspective can doom many students to failure (Erickson, 1987; Gay, 1990; Zanger, 1990)

> ... it is important for educators to realize that the educational problems of students of color cannot be resolved by being interpreted as the main cause for students' lack of success. Educators must understand that they (and the overall structures of school and society) play a major role in the lack of academic success of students of color. Until that is understood educational success will escape all involved. (Grant, 1991, p. 252)

McDiarmid (1991) argued that teachers must integrate subject matter into their understanding of cultural diversity. Teacher education programs are required to include multicultural education in their curriculum, but the concept is not widely implemented in the schools of Eastern North Carolina. Zanger (1990) concluded that staff development can help educational leaders deal more effectively with diversity.

> There is some evidence that this training influenced principals' views on the question of what difference do

differences make and nurtured the notion that diversity provides an asset, not a deficit, to the individual. (p. 4)

Purpose and Goals of the Institute

Principals and other educational leaders can play a critical role in developing and shaping the culture of a school (Rosenholtz, 1989; Smith & Peterson, 1988; Schein, 1985), but our observations and conversations with educational leaders indicated that many of them are not sure why this role is important and how it should be accomplished. The purpose of the Institute was to prepare educational leaders to design organizational interventions which would facilitate multicultural education in their schools.

The Institute had three goals:

1. The project participants will develop insight into the issue of perceiving differences from the dominant culture as deficiencies.
2. The project participants will acquire knowledge about how cultural differences affect the parents, teachers, and students in their schools; and
3. The project participants will develop skills that will assist them in shaping the culture of their schools.

The Institute for Multicultural Education and Change

Design

We designed the Institute as an intense three credit hour graduate course. The Institute included an introductory meeting in May, a one week seminar in June, a concluding meeting in

August, and follow-up visits to individual schools. At the introductory meeting, the participants received information on the format and calendar of the Institute and took part in a simulation of cultural exchange, BaFa BaFa. During the week long seminar the participants took part in lectures, discussions, small group activities with one another, the co-directors, and guest speakers. In the concluding session, the participants presented multicultural lesson plans to their colleagues and guests and submitted their action plans for their initiatives during the 1991-92 school in their own organizations.

The Dean of the School of Education, Dr. Charles Coble; the Chairman of the Department of Educational Leadership, Dr. H. C. Hudgins, Jr.; and the Chairman of the Department of Foundations, Research, and Instructional Technology, Dr. James Pressley made it possible for us to move from the idea of the course to a bureaucratic reality in record time. We offered the major portion of the Institute during the week between first and second summer school sessions. We started late on our program planning and we did not want to compete with the required courses our graduate students had planned to take to meet their certification and degree requirements.

We also wanted to incorporate what we knew about adult learning into the design of the Institute. We started the Institute with experiential learning, i.e., the cross-cultural simulation--BaFa BaFa. We planned collaborative activities and participant feedback into the structure and process of the

Institute. The participants had some time to reflect and explore their reflections in small work groups; discuss educational issues, lectures, and readings in larger groups; conduct literature and material searches in Joyner Library (ECU's main academic library); and work individually with colleagues and Institute staff. The staff focused the curriculum on helping the participants reflect on their personal and organizational cultures and on assisting them in developing action plans that would have a chance to make an impact in their organizations (Dr. Donald Bragaw from the Department of Elementary and Middle Grades Education was an invaluable resource to many of the participants).

Recruitment

We used two complementary strategies for recruitment. The more formal of the two involved mailing flyers and applications for the Institute to the central offices of school systems throughout Eastern North Carolina. The other strategy was word-of-mouth recruitment of graduate students in educational leadership whom the co-directors thought would have an interest and an aptitude for the Institute. The latter method was more productive given the relatively short time frame for the planning and implementation of the Institute.

Implementation

We knew that the Institute would be addressing to two sensitive issues in Eastern North Carolina: culture and multicultural education. We wanted to position ourselves so that

we had a chance to be successful. We developed clear objectives which we discussed regularly with the participants. We made it clear that we were all involved in a collaborative process of personal and professional growth and that we had to help and support one another. We emphasized that the culture of the Institute would be open and nonthreatening. The implicit themes which supported our entire process were growth and competence. We focused on gathering data to test assumptions; we encouraged the pursuit of valid information.

The Institute participants developed action plans based on the perceived needs of their schools. The participants completed diagnoses of their respective schools. They read and discussed various strategies and techniques to facilitate multicultural education and develop effective organizational culture. The co-directors worked with the participants and made suggestions, but the participants determined what organizational change they would attempt during the 1991-92 school year.

Given the increasing external pressure on public schools, we believe that one strategy which may facilitate multicultural education and constructive organizational change is to constantly test operating assumptions with valid information (Argyris & Schon, 1974). Challenge and assist members of the organization to meet their own espoused professional and organizational obligations and objectives. The first step in that strategy is to make people understand that you are not there to blame them, but to help them. You must accept people where they are and help

them develop their own strategies for growth. Our formative evaluation indicated that our implementation strategy is moving in the right direction.

Evaluation

The formative evaluation of the Institute had two components: a survey (see Appendix A) of all the participants and a telephone interview (see Appendix B) of all the participants. The participants received the survey and the interview protocol through the mail. The response rate for the surveys was 71% (10 of 14, two of the sixteen participants left their positions) and 8 of the 10 respondents wrote comments for question 5. Through return addresses, postmarks, references to action plans, and matching handwriting samples from the institute's registration sheets, our graduate assistant determined who had responded and who had not. She made a special effort to contact by telephone individuals who had not responded to the survey or who had not sent written responses to the interview protocol.

The survey results were very positive 100% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the likert scale items, i.e., questions 1-4 (see Appendix A). The highest level of agreement was with question 3 "During the summer institute I learned to identify and evaluate instructional concepts and strategies for multicultural classrooms" (See Table 1).

The following quote describes the essence of the responses to question 5:

The summer institute made me think carefully about my own values and beliefs as I prepared to assess multicultural elements in educational structures. That intensity of thought, though not at all times comfortable, was a positive experience.

Table 1

Summary of Survey Responses

Question	Ratings				
	SD	D	U	A	SA
1	0%	0%	0%	60%	40%
2	0%	0%	0%	50%	50%
3	0%	0%	0%	30%	70%
4	0%	0%	0%	40%	60%

N = 10

Note: SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, U=Unsure, A=Agree, SA=Strongly Agree

An analysis of the telephone interviews produced three major findings. Two were suggestions for improvement and/or increasing the impact of the Institute. The first was a request for an increase in publicity about individual participation in the Institute from East Carolina University. This would include a series of press releases to local and hometown media. The

participants wanted the name recognition and the visibility associated with East Carolina University tied to their efforts. The second suggestion was for more collaborative, interactive activities such as BaFa BaFa (this simulation was conducted on the very first meeting of the Institute, May 20, 1991). The third finding was a consistent theme of the Institute's influence on participant attitudes toward multiculturalism. Virtually all the participants who responded commented that the Institute caused them to examine their own attitudes toward cultural bias. A majority also commented that although at first disconcerting, it was a beneficial exercise. Overall, people were enthusiastic, would definitely recommend the Institute to others, and praised the co-directors' organization, presentation, and accessibility.

The telephone interviews indicated that the participants felt more aware and perceptive of cultural issues in education and their own values and assumptions about the education process. The participants were less sanguine about the possible impact of their action plans. There was a concern that they might not receive strong support for their ideas. The participants wanted more support and time from the Institute staff in coaching them, in intervening with their organizations, and in developing public relations initiatives. The participants felt that the institute could be improved with more time for reflection, more collaborative group activities, more research on the impact of multicultural education, and more support from senior administrators in their school systems.

Implications

Our data suggests that relatively limited, intense staff development can have a positive impact on attitudes toward and knowledge of multicultural education and organizational change. However, it is clear that is not enough. The fledgling change agents need protection, support and encouragement from within the school system and from outside the school system. They also need time to reflect and to collaborate with one another and their peers.

We have made some plans to try to address these implications. The second summer Institute for Multicultural Education and Change will be spread out over a longer period of time to allow more reflection and more collaborative activities and we will provide follow-up support for the participants in the first Institute (see Appendix C). We will initiate a more aggressive public relations program through the University's Office of Public Information, Project EAST (Eastern Alliance for Schools for Tomorrow), state professional associations, and academic forums. We will initiate an effort to provide more coaching and individual support to our program participants and will try to institutionalize a formal support network among program participants.

The data from our formative evaluation is encouraging, but the true test will be how the action plans, developed by Institute participants, affect the culture, the explicit curriculum and the implicit curriculum of their schools.

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APPENDIX A

EVALUATION OF THE INSTITUTE OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION AND CHANGE

Would you please rate your agreement with the following statements?

1. During the summer institute I learned of the impact of culture on social and organizational interaction.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. During the summer Institute I learned to identify and analyze the individual and cultural differences which affect teaching and learning.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. During the summer institute I learned to identify and evaluate instructional concepts and strategies for multicultural classrooms.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. During the summer institute I learned to identify and assess the elements of organizational culture.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree

5. What comments would you like to make about the summer institute for multicultural education and change.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR PARTICIPANTS IN INSTITUTE FOR MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION AND CHANGE

1. Did the institute have any impact on you professionally and personally? (if no, what do you think was the reason) (if yes, would you please explain how and give examples)

2. Do you believe your action plan will make a difference in the culture of your organization? (if no, why not) (if yes, why)

3. What type of support activities would be most helpful to you during the implementation of your action plan?

4. How could the institute be improved when it is offered next summer?

APPENDIX C

1991 Schedule
Institute on Multicultural Education and Change

May 20, 1991	6-9 pm
June 24	9-1
June 25	9-1
June 26	9-1
June 27	9-1
June 28	9-1
August 2	9-1

1992 Schedule
Institute on Multicultural Education and Change

May 18, 1992	6-9 pm
June 29	9-12 & 1-4
July 06	9-12 & 1-4
July 13	9-12 & 1-4
July 20	9-12 & 1-4
July 21	9-12

Follow-up for 1991 Institute

June 30, 1992
July 7
July 14